

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS



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LEGISLATIVE ALERT!

(202) 637-5090

September 19, 2007

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the AFL-CIO, I am writing to urge you to support and co-sponsor the "James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act of 2007" (H.R. 3543). This bi-partisan bill, introduced by Representatives Carolyn Maloney, Jerrold Nadler, and Vito Fossella, would provide medical monitoring, treatment, and compensation to emergency responders, recovery and clean-up workers, and others suffering serious diseases as a result of hazardous exposures resulting from the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

On September 11, 2001 and during the following days and weeks, tens of thousands of emergency workers, construction workers, and others rushed to the World Trade Center (WTC) to assist in rescue and recovery operations. These workers and residents, and others near Ground Zero, were exposed to a toxic mix of dust and fumes from the collapse of the World Trade Center and the fires that lingered. Now many of these individuals, particularly the heroic responders who experienced the highest exposures, are suffering from serious respiratory diseases and other health problems.

Studies conducted by the Mount Sinai Medical Center, the Fire Department of New York (FDNY), and the New York City World Trade Center Health Registry have all documented significant respiratory problems among firefighters, police, construction workers, and others who responded to the 9/11 attacks. In addition, high incidences of gastrointestinal and mental health problems have been found, and there is growing concern about the development of other chronic diseases.

These health problems are widespread and serious. Nearly 70 percent of responders examined by the Mount Sinai School of Medicine suffered respiratory problems, with one-third suffering significant loss of lung function. The FDNY found that rescue workers suffered an average loss of 12 years of lung capacity. Moreover, a number of deaths have now been officially attributed to exposure to WTC toxins.

Many of those who are sick can no longer work. Their workers' compensation claims are being contested, and they have lost their health insurance. They are in dire need of medical treatment.

For the past several years, Congress has designated emergency funding for the WTC Worker and Volunteer Medical Screening Program, which has provided medical monitoring through the FDNY and a consortium of clinical centers coordinated by Mount Sinai. For the past year, additional emergency funds have paid for medical treatment for WTC responders who are sick. But this funding is only a short-term stopgap measure.

The Maloney-Nadler-Fossella bill provides a comprehensive long-term solution to address the serious health problems that WTC responders and area residents are facing as a result of 9/11 hazardous exposures.

H.R. 3543 would establish the World Trade Center Health Program, under the direction of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to provide medical monitoring and treatment for WTC-related health conditions to responders and area residents. It would build off the existing medical programs to provide high quality care through the Clinical Centers of Excellence at the FDNY, the Mt. Sinai consortium, and the WTC Environmental Health Center at Bellevue Hospital. Additional clinical centers would be designated, including those to provide monitoring and treatment for those outside the New York area. Coordinating Centers of Excellence would be established to develop uniform treatment protocols and collect and analyze data.

Individuals who meet the eligibility criteria would receive monitoring and medical treatment for WTC-related health conditions at no cost.

H.R. 3543 would also reopen the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund to provide compensation for economic damages and loss for those who were not previously eligible or became sick after the original December 22, 2003 deadline, with awards determined by a Special Master.

The attack on the World Trade Center was not only an attack on New York. It was an attack on the nation. Compelled by a moral obligation, the nation acted to compensate and care for those injured in the collapse of the World Trade Center and the attack on the Pentagon and the surviving family members of those who were killed. The same moral obligation should compel the nation to meet the needs of 9/11 rescue, recovery, and clean-up workers and area residents who became ill because of their exposure to WTC hazards.

The AFL-CIO strongly urges you to support and cosponsor H.R. 3543, which would provide 9/11 workers and residents the long-term medical monitoring, treatment, and compensation they need and deserve. To cosponsor this important legislation, please contact Anna Cielinski in Rep. Maloney's office at 202-225-7944.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'William Samuel', is written over a horizontal line.

William Samuel, Director
DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATION